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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003882

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER IT YE

SUBJECT: ITALIAN-YEMENI COOPERATION ON BORDER CONTROL

Classified By: Polmincons David Pearce, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request: please see para 5.

¶2. (C) Italian Minister of Interior Giuseppe Pisanu visited Sanaa last week for talks with his Yemeni counterpart. According to Pisanu's Diplomatic Advisor, Ambassador Guido Lenzi, the most urgent bilateral issue discussed was Yemen's request for additional assistance on border control, specifically for the Coast Guard.

¶2. (C) According to Lenzi, Italy in January 2006 will provide the Yemenis with one speedboat and have granted them a 20 million euro soft loan for a feasibility study and subsequent installation of an integrated maritime border control system. An Italian firm (nfi) has offered a bid on the control system, which the Yemenis are apparently considering.

¶3. (C) However, the Yemenis appear to be shopping the project around and would like more, including a request for ten additional and bigger (25 meter) vessels. Lenzi had understood that last week in Washington President Saleh had also discussed the possibility of U.S. funding for these projects.

¶4. (C) Lenzi was seeking some sense of whether the U.S. would approve the project. He said it was unlikely the Italians would continue to provide piecemeal support for the Yemenis but would be open to considering a consolidated package on coastal/border control assistance. Action request: Please advise if we can share any information with Rome on the status of our bilateral cooperation with Sanaa on border control.

¶5. (C) Comment: Italy has implemented a similar bilateral assistance program on border control with Albania, has an ongoing program to provide vessels, technical assistance and training to Libya and recently entered into discussions about coastal control with Malta. From the Italian perspective, this is preventative outreach to help stem a growing tide of illegal immigrants landing on Italy's southern coast. It is also an offshoot of Italian Democracy Assistance Dialogue cooperation with Yemen. Lenzi in the past has noted that Italy would welcome U.S. efforts to include immigration control issues within the scope of BMENA activities, as it provides Rome with an important domestic payoff. Cooperation to assist the Yemenis could be an opportunity to encourage continued Italian engagement.

SPOGLI